considered that the increased production of these guns was a question of the first importance.

As a result of this Inter-Departmental Conference it was recommended that the arming of merchant ships should be entrusted to the Admiralty, the War Office and Ministry of Munitions, the responsibility for initiating action to rest with the Admiralty.

On November i3th another meeting of the War Committee decided :—

> " Having regard, first, to the fact that the power of the Allies to continue the War would be materially diminished by continued losses of merchant ships, and second, to the accumulating evidence of the value of guns as a defence for merchant ships against submarine attack, the War Committee *A principle* decided that, AS A QUESTION OF *established* PRINCIPLE, the arming of merchant ships up to a number considered by the Admiralty as indispensable should be a first charge on our artillery resources.'[5]

No immediate action seems to have been taken to carry this decision beyond the establishment of the principle.

Less than four weeks after this Committee, the Second Coalition Government was formed. A fresh energy was infused into the work of arming merchant-men. Lord Jellicoe says in his book, ' The Crisis of the Naval War " :—

" The *defensive arming* of merchant ships was a matter which was pressed forward with great energy and rapidity during the year 1917. The matter was taken up with the Cabinet immediately